

Africa: SDP and sports academies

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Introduction and References

Within mainstream migration studies, there is a voluminous literature on migration- development interactions and outcomes (cf. De Haas 2010). As this Handbook reveals, there is also a significant and growing body of research on the relationships between sport and development. Falling between these two canons of academic work is a smaller literature which has explored the intersections between sports migration and development in the global South (Darby 2000 ; Bale 2004 ; Klein 2014 ; Esson 2015a). Much of this work has focused on football migration from the African continent, particularly West Africa, and has acknowledged that football academies, defined as facilities or coaching programs designed to produce talent predominantly for export, are pivotal in this process (Darby *et al.* 2007).

Recent scholarship has shown how aspirations to migrate and the academies that seek to facilitate this articulate with varying forms of social and economic development in complex ways, and produce more heterogeneous outcomes than were previously observed (Darby 2013a; Dubinsky and Schler 2017). This chapter explores these articulations in relation to football in Africa, predominantly Ghana where academies have become increasingly visible. While African football is the focus of the chapter, this discussion speaks to wider debates on the migration-development nexus in the context of sport, namely the tension between sport development, the commodification of sporting talent, and aspirations to develop an individual through sport and thereby enact wider social development.

We begin by positioning the academic, media and policy discourses concerning football academies within wider polemicizing on the migration- development nexus. After briefly accounting for the typologies of football academies in Africa, we then concentrate on Ghana, a context where all three authors have undertaken considerable ethnographic field research examining various aspects of what has become a culture of football migration. The chapter examines the relationship between migration, football academies and development via the following four themes: the shifting role of academies in relation to national development agendas; academies as vehicles for development; their contribution to local and national sport development; and the role of family in decision- making around the pursuit of transnational mobility through football. We conclude by outlining two key areas for future research that will extend debates over football academies vis- à - vis the migration (in sport)- development nexus.

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